



ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Statement on Maintaining and Promoting Stability in the Maritime Sphere in Southeast Asia

30 December 2023

1. We recall and reaffirm our shared commitment to maintaining and promoting peace, security, and stability in the region, as well as to the peaceful resolution of disputes, including full respect for legal and diplomatic processes, without resorting to the threat or use of force, in accordance with the universally recognised principles of international law, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).
2. We further recall the Joint Communique of the 56th ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting (AMM), in which we recognised the need to maintain and strengthen stability in the maritime sphere in our region and underlined the importance of strengthening maritime cooperation and exploring new initiatives towards this end, as appropriate.
3. We closely follow with concern the recent developments in the South China Sea that may undermine peace, security, and stability in the region. We reaffirm the importance of maintaining and promoting peace, safety, security, stability, and freedom of navigation in and overflight above the maritime sphere of Southeast Asia, particularly the South China Sea. We also reaffirm the need to restore and enhance mutual trust and confidence as well as exercise self-restraint in the conduct of activities that would complicate or escalate disputes and affect peace and stability, avoid actions that may further complicate the situation and pursue peaceful resolution of disputes in accordance with the universally recognised principles of international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS.
4. We welcome the efforts to manage the situations and ensure that peace and stability are maintained. We recognize the benefits of having the South China Sea as a sea of peace, stability, cooperation, and prosperity. We underscored the importance of the full and effective implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) in its entirety and committed to working towards the early conclusion of an effective and substantive Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC) that is in accordance with international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS.
5. We reiterate the importance of peaceful dialogue that contributes constructively to the promotion of regional stability and cooperation in the maritime domain. We welcome the recent holding of a maritime dialogue between China and the United States in Beijing and the meeting between U.S. President Joe Biden and China President Xi Jinping on the margins of the APEC Leaders' Meeting in California. We hope that such dialogues will continue to further ASEAN's efforts to strengthen stability and cooperation in the region's maritime sphere.
6. We reaffirm our unity and solidarity and our shared commitment to maintaining and further strengthening stability in our maritime sphere to bring about overall peace, security, stability, and prosperity in our region.